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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 000533

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TAGS: YI IR KPAL PREL PGOV ENRG PO
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL'S THOUGHTS ON MARCH 5-6 GAERC

REF: SECSTATE 23592

Classified By: Dana M. Brown, Pol-Econ Officer, Embassy Lisbon
Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Pol-Econ Officer met MFA Deputy EU Correspondent Ana Filomena Rocha to solicit Portugal's views on the March GAERC issues. Energy, the UN Human Rights Council, and climate issues do not fall under Rocha's portfolio, so she did not comment.

¶2. (SBU) BOSNIA: The EU unanimously supports the decision to extend the mandate for the Office of the High Representative with hopes of stabilizing the situation. Rocha doubted there would be any significant policy change towards Bosnia over the next couple of months but speculated that the EU could lose patience if progress continues to drag with the ongoing High Rep assistance.

¶3. (C) ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ISSUES: Rocha stated that the formation of Palestine's National Unity Government (NUG) is a positive step back from internal violence. She mentioned that Portugal would like to encourage progress and could be willing to consider re-engaging with the new government even in the absence of a full commitment to the Quartet principles. However, she agreed with our assertion that the international community will have to reserve judgment until the NUG takes any action towards dialogue.

¶4. (SBU) IRAN: Rocha reported that Portugal shares our concerns about Iran's nuclear program and is currently implementing the EU's common position restrictions. When asked about additional measures such as export credit restrictions, she responded that export credits had not been mentioned in the GAERC and would work in Portugal but probably be unacceptable to several other EU members.

¶5. (U) SUDAN/DARFUR: The EU will continue to support Darfur a while longer since it reallocated European Development Funds for the mission. Rocha stressed that attempts to locate funding from other donor nations like Japan, Russia, Australia, China, and the Arab League had not been successful -- both China and Australia have already declined outright. Although Germany, Denmark and the UK have contributed through bilateral donations, the mission is quickly running out of funding options, according to Rocha.

¶6. (C) UZBEKISTAN: The Portuguese remain unconvinced by arguments that Uzbekistan is ready to have a serious discussion about human rights issues; consequently, Portugal is not interested in lifting sanctions. Rocha said the progress on human rights issues during the sanction term had not been significant and that Uzbekistan had not yet demonstrated a will to change its practices.

Hoffman